

THE PLURALISTS

Some Prolegomena...

Who were they?

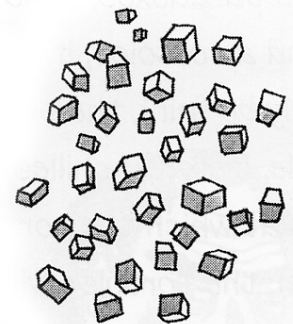
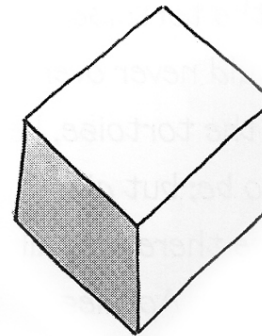
- » Anaxagoras
- » Empedocles
- » Democritus



The goal – *Reconciling 'Being and Becoming'*

- » The Eleatic legacy to philosophy (and science) consisted in putting forward a (somewhat) plausible *refutation* of our ordinary ways of thinking about the world, and the immediate task for philosophy was to try and meet this challenge one way or another
- » In order to establish the reality of the world we experience and to give an acceptable account of that world, it was necessary to either refute Parmenides' (and Zeno's) arguments OR to find an acceptable way around them

Is Reality One Thing?



Or Many?

Two Worlds Theory

“Being” and “Becoming”

“All of these thinkers accepted some Eleatic claims– notably that nothing can be generated out of sheer non-being (what IS NOT) and that something that IS cannot perish into sheer non-being either... On the other hand, they all denied the Eleatic thesis that there is only one thing in existence and that motion cannot exist... They all distinguished between two realms of reality, which we can call the ‘basic’ realm and the ‘phenomena’ realm...

The phenomenal realm is the world we see around us, which includes plurality, change, motion, coming to be and perishing (i.e. the world of ‘Becoming’)...

While the basic realm consists of other entities– atoms and void for Democritus, fire, air, water and earth for Empedocles and apparently unlimited variety [and number] of stuffs and attributes for Anaxagoras...

At the basic level (i.e. the world of ‘Being’) we have entities that are not created nor destroyed and that in other ways satisfy to a lesser or greater degree the conditions the Eleatics established for existing things (i.e. ‘what IS’)... The phenomenal world is then accounted for in terms of the behavior of the basic entities...” (McKirahan)

ANAXAGORAS

“Seeds, Mixture and Mind...”

The basic entities

- » ‘Seeds’ (*spermata*)

The principle/process of change (individuation)...

- » This mixture is set into rotary motion by the operation of ‘Mind’ (*nous*)-- the source of motion and principle of order responsible for the various arrangement and mixture of the ‘seeds’

The Textual Evidence...

- » “The Greeks do not think correctly about coming-to-be and passing-away; for no thing comes to be or passes away, but is mixed together and dissociated from the things that are. And thus they would be correct to call coming-to-be mixing-together and passing-away dissociating”
- » “All things were together, unlimited both in amount and in smallness, for the small, too, was unlimited. And because all things were together, nothing was evident”



EMPEDOCLES

“Roots, Love and Strife...”

The basic entities

- » The four ‘roots’ (as he calls them), earth, water, air, and fire

The principle/process of change (individuation)...

- » The motive forces of *Love and Strife*. Love unites opposed (unlike) things, mixing unlikes, while Strife sets unlikes in opposition and pulls them apart, with the effect that it mixes like with like.
- » The cosmos as we know it is a result of intermediate phases between the two extremes of the triumph of one of the forces.

The Textual Evidence...

- » The operations of Love and Strife, using just the four roots can produce “trees and men and women, and beasts and birds and water-nourished fish, and long-lived gods best in honors”



DEMOCRITUS

“Atoms and Void...”

The basic entities

- » Atoms and Void... An infinite number of solid, uncuttable (*atomon*) units of matter and the ‘empty’ (space?) or void that separates the atoms and allows for their differences and movement

The principle/process of change (individuation)...

- » The (random?) movement and collision of atoms... Everything is constructed of atoms and void: the shapes of the atoms and their arrangement with respect to each other (and the intervening void) give physical objects their apparent characteristics.

The Textual Evidence...

- » “There is no more reason for the thing *TO BE* than the nothing...”
- » “By convention sweet and by convention bitter, by convention hot, by convention cold, by convention color: in reality atoms and void”
- » “Democritus makes sweet that which is round and quite large, astringent that which large, rough, polygonal and not rounded”

